



ICTs and Development: A Study of Telecentres in Rural India

Maitrayee Mukerji

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ICT-D refers to the trend in development thinking and practice that considers deployment of new technologies like computers, mobile phones and Internet, which are important for spurring economic growth, enabling good governance and facilitating human development. In this context, telecentres have emerged as an immensely popular strategy for providing shared and mediated access to ICTs. The rapid proliferation of telecentres in rural India during the last decade was driven by multiple agencies, each with their own purpose, priorities and pre-designed set of services. This volume juxtaposes the global discourse on ICT-D and telecentres with in-depth empirical case studies on the pattern of access and use of telecenters in rural India to draw implications for policy and practice.

It suggest that access and use of telecentres and their services are mediated by the multiple contexts in which they are embedded. While they provide opportunities for people to interact with new technologies, their impact has been mainly in terms of convenience provided by some of the services vis-à-vis existing alternate channels. Particular telecentre models have brought about some change, but this is only when there was a match between the services provided and the local demand for particular information and services. The delivery structure services in terms of user fee, need for reading and computing skills, and linkages with existing institutional context have further shaped access and use.

The efficacy of telecentres in generating new jobs in rural areas, increasing efficiency and reach of e-Governance and other basic services, enhancing livelihoods and the well-being of the people, and overcoming the rural-urban divide has been limited.

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